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SUBJECT: SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY: NIGERIA

REF: 03 STATE 333935

¶1. The following is Mission Nigeria's submission for the 2003-4 edition of the Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: the U.S. Record.

Begin text. Nigeria held multiparty general elections in 2003, the second since the end of military rule in 1998, returning President Obasanjo to another four-year term despite allegations of electoral misconduct. Nigeria remains "Africa's essential country, with influence far beyond its borders." The United States remains a key partner for Nigeria's reformers, and we have helped Nigeria reach a number of human rights milestones despite ongoing major problems. Years of authoritarian misrule diminished or destroyed most national institutions, and corruption has rotted the civil service and most parastatals. Nigeria is beset by religious and ethnic divisions, all too often violent, and its Government sometimes has been as much a part of the problems as of the solutions. Our major priorities have been: to assist consolidation of democracy and improvements in its effectiveness and transparency; to strengthen civil society participation in governance processes; to work closely with the government and civil society to improve their ability to monitor, manage and prevent human rights abuses nationwide and communal conflict in areas of known ethnic or religious tension; and to reduce and remedy trafficking in persons.

During this election year, the Embassy has been a staunch advocate of democratic processes and reforms inside and outside the Nigerian government. The Embassy has reported on numerous human rights abuses committed by security forces, and helped human rights organizations and the media more effectively play their roles in democracy. INL continued its train-the-trainers program on police reform with three 4-week programs to improve the professionalism, responsibility and performance of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Human rights, including such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings, were a major focus. INL also managed a 6-month program for 500 new NPF recruits, that included training on Human Rights and Law Enforcement, Community Policing, and the proper use of force.

The Embassy has worked long and hard to help Nigeria improve the professionalism of its military, the military's respect for human rights, and all Nigerians' appreciation and support for civilian rule. Congress has put sanctions on military aid to Nigeria, a loss of over 6.8 million dollars, in response to the massacre of approximately 200 civilians in Benue State in 2001 by the Nigerian army. Secretary Powell and Assistant Secretary Kansteiner added personal demarches this year to a continuing Embassy campaign of pressing the Nigerian Government to hold a proper and honest investigation, and to punish the responsible parties. The Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) sponsored a Defense Institute of International Legal Studies seminar for Nigerian military and civilian leaders with a focus on human rights, international law, rules of engagement and civilian control of the military. ODC continued to sponsor a high-level program at the Ministry of Defense (MOD), to teach proper civil-military relations and assist in the reorganization of the MOD.

The Embassy has worked with civil society, political parties and the media in an effort to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. The Embassy itself played an active observer role at the political party conventions, at all levels of the elections in multiple states, and at tribunals looking into allegations of election fraud. We provided training to civil society and gave speeches in numerous fora to encourage it to play more effective roles in policy advocacy and government oversight. We worked with political parties to widen the participation of the general public, particularly women, in the political process. We also assisted government officials, political and social leaders to understand the issues underlying violent conflicts in their areas, and to formulate strategies to resolve the conflicts.

USAID committed \$3 million to improving governance in 2003. One focus was to strengthen the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), professionalize political parties, and train polling agents and election monitors. A

National Information Center was established for civil society to transmit "real time" data from nearly 12,000 domestic monitors. USAID also funded Islamic women's groups to serve as election monitors for the first time, with more than 1800 monitors. Aid to State Assemblies trained staff in technical and procedural matters; 56 new pieces of legislation were passed nationwide for legislative management, implementing constitutional requirements, and improving core development issues such as infrastructure, social services, conflict mitigation and security. USAID-trained legislative associates (interns) were embedded in State Assemblies, and the National Assembly assumed management of its USG-funded computer resources center. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section made two Funds for Civic Education program grants for public education in democratization and civil rights.

The Embassy is expanding its efforts to make rule of law more effective, working with Nigerian courts to improve case management and judicial ethics, and building the investigative capacity and independence of Nigerian government agencies charged with investigating corruption and monitoring procurement. USAID committed \$1.25 million in judicial strengthening activities to improve management and dissemination of court information, codify judicial ethics, and expand public access to justice through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Nigeria's second multi-purpose ADR Center in Abuja will offer civil mediation and arbitration services. We helped Chief Judges in pilot state jurisdictions create new bar/bench management committees that helped produce timely and accurate judicial reports, shorten the time between litigation, settlement and final disposition, and reduce the number of appeals based upon recording inaccuracies. Judges from three pilot jurisdictions unanimously ratified a "Code of Conduct for its Court Employees," requiring employees to be accountable for resources; protect confidential information; avoid the appearance of impropriety; refrain from using their position for personal enrichment; and, uphold high standards of behavior.

The Embassy funded several Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) projects to encourage respect for the rights of women.

In the North, we worked with a local NGO to create radio programs promoting the empowerment and education of Muslim women. We also sponsored a televised docudrama aired nationwide to educate viewers about the problem of domestic violence. We continued working with a domestic NGO to educate policymakers in three states on introducing legislation for the eradication of female genital mutilation.

The Public Affairs Section's International Visitors Program, with input from several different sections of the Mission, sent representatives from Nigeria's civil society, government and media to a wide range of U.S. programs, notably conflict resolution, NGO management, empowerment of women, trafficking issues, and Islam in America.

The Embassy worked extensively on the problem of inter-religious violence and religious freedom, meeting with national and local political and religious leaders on multiple occasions to gain a better understanding of the problems and to advocate resolution. Embassy officers gave speeches across the country calling for reconciliation, and travelled extensively to work with state officials and Muslim and Christian leaders on promoting peace and ending discrimination. USAID committed \$1.044 million to support a range of conflict management and peace-building activities, including sponsoring a Christian Pastor and Islamic Imam from Kaduna at a peace-building course at the School of International Training in Vermont in 2003. The two leaders then trained members of the Kaduna Peace Committee, and USAID paid for radio and television programs where the Pastor and Imam could discuss conflict issues in Kaduna and Kano. In 2004 the Pastor and Imam received the prestigious Common Ground Award from the well known NGO, Search for Common Ground, in recognition of the success of their peacemaking efforts.

Elsewhere in Nigeria, USAID's "Basketball for Peace" Program engaged unemployed and out-of-school Muslim and Christian youth in basketball tournaments to create competition without violence, a program which gained national attention. Concerns about the implementation of new laws based on Shari'a (Islamic justice) in several Nigerian states led USAID partners to establish the Shari'a Stakeholders Consultative Group. The Group served as both rule of law advocate and information source in the landmark Amina Lawal adultery/capital crime case. USAID and the Embassy have funded various programs to help bring peace to the oil-rich Niger delta, where inter-communal violence has killed dozens and displaced thousands of Nigerians.

Finally, the Embassy has taken a very active role in helping Nigeria combat trafficking in persons, including a \$2.3 million commitment from the State Department. The Department of Justice provided another \$350,000 from its International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP)

and Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) program to train prosecutors, law enforcement, and judicial officials -- training which also forwards our rule of law and anti-corruption interests. An additional \$500,000 from ESF supports two rehabilitation shelters for victims of trafficking. The Department of Labor provided financial backing for the International Labor Organization's "Program to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor," and USAID committed Development Assistance to anti-trafficking programs. USG officials traveled to Nigeria in 2003 to help raise public awareness, meet with government officials, law enforcement, and NGOs. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section published magazine articles on trafficking in women and children, and held a televised discussion forum on Trafficking in Persons with officials of the Human Rights Commission, the Police Service Commission, human rights advocacy groups, the Federation of International Women Lawyers, national legislators, and journalists. End text.  
Roberts